

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 12940 251450Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MC-02 ACDA-05 EB-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1406

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, IN, US, PK

SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER ON PAKISTANI ARMS BID

REF: NEW DELHI 12871

1. WHEN DEFENSE MINISTER SWARAN SINGH WAS QUESTIONED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY DEFENSE COMMITTEE ON THE PAKISTAN TIMES REPORT ON US ARMS SALES, HE REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER "PAKISTAN'S RENEWED BID TO BUY OFFENSIVE WEAPONS FROM THE UNITED STATES." A SECOND VERSION REPORTS ONLY THAT THE MINISTER SAID INDIA WAS AWARE OF THE REPORTED PAKISTANI BID TO OBTAIN ARMS FROM THE UNITED STATES. THE MINISTER TOLD THE COMMITTEE ON SEPTEMBER 24 THAT ALTHOUGH THE UNITED STATES HAD SAID THE SUPPLY OF ARMS WOULD BE ON A CASH-AND-CARRY BASIS, THIS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THE MINISTER ADDED THAT ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN'S SHOPPING LIST INCLUDES JET FIGHTERS, TANK
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 12940 251450Z

MISSILES, HOWITZERS, HELICOPTERS AND GROUND-TO-AIR MISSILES.

2. THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER PAKISTAN'S EFFORTS TO SEEK OFFENSIVE WEAPONS FROM THE UNITED STATES AND URGED INDIA TO TAKE SUITABLE ACTION TO WARD OFF THE THREAT STEMMING FROM THE REARMAMENT OF PAKISTAN. THE MEMBERS ALSO REFERRED TO THE PAKISTAN TIMES REPORT THAT PAKISTAN MIGHT SEEK OFFENSIVE WEAPONS FROM THE SOURCES IF THE UNITED STATES REFUSED TO SELL THEM. THEY CHARGED THAT DESPITE INDIA'S FRIENDLY GESTURES, PAKISTANI PRESS AND RADIO PROPAGANDA COULD BE A SERIOUS SETBACK TO THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS IN THE SUBCONTINENT.

3. COMMENT: TEXTS OF MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES ARE NOT MADE PUBLIC; THUS WE ARE UNABLE TO REPORT PRECISELY WHAT SWARAN SINGH SAID, BUT HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE HE WAS REPORTED INACCURATELY. CONSIDERING HOW PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES FUNCTION, THE MINISTER SEEMS TO HAVE SAID ABOUT THE MINIMUM THE CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRED. THE GOI HAS STILL NOT RAISED THE ARMS SUBJECT WITH US OFFICIALLY. OTHER THAN A PREDICTABLE CRITICISM IN THE NEW DELHI COMMUNIST DAILY PATRIOT, WE HAVE SEEN NO EDITORIAL COMMENT BASED ON THE PAKISTAN TIMES STORY. SAXBE

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